

REMARKS

Applicants hereby amend claim 15 and add claim 45. Applicants hereby cancel claims 28 and 43, without prejudice or disclaimer, to avoid redundancy with independent claims 15 and 45. Claims 5, 15, 17-21, 23-27, 29, 30-42, 44, and 45 remain pending in this application, of which claims 5, 17-21, 23-27, and 30-42 have been withdrawn from consideration.

Amendments to the Specification

The “BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION” section of the Specification has been amended.

Objected-to Claims 43 and 44

The Examiner objected to claims 43 and 44 as “dependent upon a rejected base claim, but . . . allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims” (Office Action, page 6, paragraph 2).

Independent claim 15 is being amended to include limitations of objected-to claim 43 and intervening claim 28, which depends from claim 15. Thus, claim 15 and claims 16, 22, 29, and 44, which depend therefrom, should be allowed over the cited references.

§ 102(b) Rejection of Claims 15, 16, 22, and 28 and § 103(a) Rejection of Claim 29 over Yamamoto et al. and Hashimoto et al.

The Examiner rejected claims 15, 16, 22, and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,879,844 to Yamamoto et al. ("Yamamoto et al."). In addition, the Examiner rejected claim 29 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Yamamoto et al. in view of Japanese Patent Publication 11-174658 to Hashimoto et al. ("Hashimoto et al.").

As explained above, independent claim 15 is hereby amended to include limitations of objected-to claim 43, which the Examiner indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, and intervening claim 28. Thus, the § 102(b) rejection of independent claim 15 and claims 16, 22, and 28, which depend therefrom, and the § 103(a) rejection of claim 29, which depends from independent claim 15, should be withdrawn. Since claims 28 is being canceled, the § 102(b) rejection is moot in relation to claim 28.

New Claim 45

Applicants add independent claim 45 to include limitations of objected-to claim 44, which the Examiner indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, and intervening claims 28 and 29. Thus, independent claim 45 should be allowed over the cited references.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: September 6, 2007
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Reg. No. 52,072